

From: Christian Nielsen
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 10:38am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I don't really know that much about the current state of the DOJ's case against Microsoft, but as the UNIX System Administrator at a small liberal arts college in St. Peter, MN, I know that Microsoft has certainly made my life difficult on multiple occasions. It is next to impossible to inventory licenses for 3000+ Windows machines, and all it takes is one disgruntled person on our campus to make a call to the Business Software Alliance, a Microsoft backed organization, and we get slapped with an audit (which we have to pay for, no less!).

Also, Microsoft's refusal to publish thorough APIs for things such as their implementation of the SMB protocol prevent other operating systems from being fully integrated with the 'Microsoft' part of our network. SAMBA, the open-source implementation of the SMB protocol works great for most things, but Microsoft keeps changing something with each new release of Windows that breaks SAMBA. A month or two after later, the SAMBA team usually has reverse engineered Microsoft's changes so everything works great again, but 2 months is not a trivial wait! If Microsoft was forced to publish good APIs for their products and protocols, I have no doubt that free, open source, GPL software such as SAMBA could and would provide a much higher and more immediate level of compatibility with MS products.

Same story with Microsoft's line of Office products. Compatibility providing products for Linux such as AbiWord and StarOffice generally have no trouble reading MS-Word formatted documents, as long as the MS-Word document was created with an older version of MS-Office. Microsoft intentionally obfuscates the way MS-Office writes documents so that competing products will not be able to properly render MS-Word documents. Again, reverse engineering of Microsoft's products eventually leads to compatibility with open source and free products, but the wait can be prohibitive. If Microsoft would simply publish their APIs, products like StarOffice could be re-written to be compatible *while* MS-Office is being written, not *after* it has been released.

Thanks for your time, I hope my input will be useful during this comment period provided by the Tunney Act. Also, please make sure that you can verify the source of comments. I wouldn't put an attempt to fake support past certain groups.

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